



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Red squill, one of the most important poisons used in the control of rats, is again coming into the United States as a result of improved conditions in the Mediterranean area and will be subjected to a fortifying process developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service to increase its toxicity, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Service, said today.

Imports of red squill, a plant of the lily family which is native to the Mediterranean area, had been reduced to an insignificant amount by the war. The occupation of North Africa last year and subsequent events have so improved conditions that 100 tons of squill have already been received and another 200 tons are available for importation. The material is imported in the form of dried slices or chips of the bulbs.

The Foreign Economic Administration now supervises the importation of red squill and the War Production Board allocates the supply. The Fish and Wildlife Service is acting as advisor to both agencies regarding the standardization and distribution of the drug.

Supplies of red squill received during the past several years have been of such poor quality that the powder was ineffective when combined with baits for rat poison, Dr. Gabrielson said. The Fish and Wildlife Service therefore undertook to develop a method of fortifying the squill in a pilot plant established in its Wildlife Research Laboratory in Denver. As a result of the work of D. Glenn Crabtree, a chemist of the Service, the squill can now be "standardized" or fortified so that it becomes an effective raticide.

The New Orleans Health Department has now established a fortification plant, and commercial importers of red squill have indicated their interest in applying the fortification process to supplies allotted them by the War Production Board.

The principal source of red squill is Algeria. In the past imports have also come from Italy, Sardinia, and Albania. Before war conditions interfered with the trade, about 400 tons of bulbs were imported annually.

Red squill is considered a critically important material in the control of rats because it is the safest and most satisfactory of the available poisons. While domestic animals may eat materials to which red squill has been added, they do not retain it and so are not harmed by it. This is not true, however, of rats, which are fatally affected.